

# **EXHIBIT C**



# This American Life Archive

## Recommended

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## How to Listen

About

## Transcript

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# 656: Let Me Count the Ways

**Announcements**

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- ## ◦ Jobs

- ### ◦ Music

## Prologue

- ### ◦ Make Radio

Ira Glass 7:10 AM, Friday Tijuana, Mexico, at a little plaza just outside the border crossing into the United States. About 250 people, lots with backpacks and suitcases, lots with kids, crowd around a woman who holds an oversized notebook in her arms. That's what I've come to see. The notebook.

- ### ◦ Store

## Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]

- ## ◦ Contact Us

# Ira Glass Anybody else have 532?

 Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]

## Ira Glass Anybody got 533?

## Follow Us

## Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]

- f

Ira Glass



524? The notebook is a list of names, each neatly written in ballpoint pen. If she calls you, then you get to enter the official port of entry. It's just over the fence. Each number has 10 names under it.

### Recommended

How to Listen  
Karen OK. [SPEAKING SPANISH]

### About

Ira Glass You have to get in the book. If you just walk up to the port of entry and say you want asylum in the United States, you're running for your life, they'll tell you to get out. You have to go outside. Get a number. Wait your turn. A couple of people told <sup>534</sup> Ira Glass this happened to them.

- Fellowships  
Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]
- Jobs

Ira Glass She starts to call out all the names under the number 535. I've edited out the last names here because so many people were nervous about being identified by cartels and gangs when we talked to them.

- On The Road  
Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH] Alexa? Alexa? Alberto?
- FAQ

Ira Glass She's standing outside the busiest border crossing in the Western hemisphere, a complex of buildings so sprawling that I never figured out exactly where they started and ended. It's run by a federal agency with 60,000 employees. This woman is not one of them. She's seeking asylum herself, here with her son.

◦ Our Other Shows  
She said her husband was killed by gangs back in El Salvador. Then in July, they threatened to do it to her 10-year-old son, too, if she didn't pay up. So she said she quit her job and abandoned her house and came here. That's who we have pulling people from the crowd and lining them up to enter the United States. That's our system for doing it these days.

Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]



Ira Glass Calm down. Calm down, she says. Now, in theory, this job shouldn't fall to a random person who's not even a US citizen. Under US law and international treaties, the moment anybody seeking asylum presents him or herself to a border patrol officer, that officer has an obligation to process them, right then.

### How to Listen

So in <sup>theory</sup>, all the people standing in this plaza should be able to march up to the huge border station and get processed immediately. No wait, no notebook with numbers. But under President Trump, the government's saying it doesn't have the capacity to process all the people showing up at our southern border. So people stand outside <sup>the border</sup> waiting. Not just here, but at official ports of entry all across the <sup>southwest</sup>.

### Fellowships

Over the <sup>last</sup> six months, Customs and Border Protection officers have been stopping <sup>asylum</sup> seekers from even walking up to federal facilities at the border. This has been filmed by crews from CBS, NBC, Fox, and many others. They stop people in the middle of bridges that cross from Mexico into the United States at El Paso and Brownsville and turn them away before they can even get to the official ports of entry on the other side to apply for asylum.

### FAQ

Customs and Border Protection says the people are allowed in once space becomes available. They expect this will be temporary, and I quote, "No one is being denied the opportunity to make a claim of credible fear or seek asylum." The lawyers for the immigrants point out that, in the past, these facilities have not had a problem processing the <sup>number of</sup> people who show up today. So people are kept waiting outside to fend for themselves.



Here in Tijuana, it's so many people that they wait for weeks. So to keep things orderly, they have this notebook. And because it raises legal issues under asylum law for either the Mexican or American governments to keep a list like this, it's managed by an asylum seeker.



Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]



**Ira Glass** The woman with the notebook is named Karen. She says that when she first arrived here from El Salvador, she put her name in the notebook-- her number is 598-- started paying for a cheap room nearby, and volunteered with Mexican officials to help clean the plaza, or whatever, just to be useful. And then at some point, the Jamaican refugee who'd been managing the notebook got his number called and passed the notebook to her.

- Overview

**Karen** [SPEAKING SPANISH]

- Staff

**Ira Glass** ~~An unlikely candidate~~ pick anybody better for this job. Karen managed people in her old job in the Salvadoran Ministry of Health, and says she was also a leader at her church. And she's good at managing people. When she's not shouting names, she calls everybody "preciosa," precious.

- Music

**Karen** [SPEAKING SPANISH]

- Make Radio

**Ira Glass** ~~On The Road~~ the daily task of disappointing people whose numbers aren't picked with as much kindness as anybody could possibly muster.

- FAQ

**Karen** [SPEAKING SPANISH]

- Store

**Ira Glass** I'm going to ask you all a favor, she's saying, but she doesn't say right away what it is. Dozens of tired people look at her.

- Our Other Shows

**Karen** [SPEAKING SPANISH]



**Ira Glass** I want us all to be happy for those who are going in.

**Follow Us**

**Karen** [SPEAKING SPANISH]

**Ira Glass** Yeah?





Ira Glass Because just like you, I'm waiting for my number, OK?

## How to Listen

Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]

## About

Ira Glass ~~Overview~~ I know the effort to be here has been hard for everybody. I know this is really difficult. I understand because I'm living it, too. I'm also paying rent. I'm also spending money on food. But I want to appeal to your conscience, OK?

- Announcements

Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]

- Fellowships

Ira Glass ~~Jobs~~ And here finally, she gets to the favor. She explains there's a pregnant woman ~~Music~~ she wants to jump to the front of the line, and she wants everybody be OK with that and feel good about it. Nobody seems too happy with this, but nobody ~~Make Radio~~ complains, either.

- On The Road

Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]

- FAQ

Ira Glass ~~The person who~~ brought me to see this is an *LA Times* reporter who first wrote about ~~the existence of the notebook~~, Cindy Carcamo. Although the ~~Store~~ notebook is supposedly the system that asylum seekers are running for each other to make ~~their wait more orderly~~, Cindy says they probably didn't create the ~~Contact Us~~ notebook. In fact, most everything about the notebook is controlled by a Mexican ~~Our Other Shows~~ government agency called Grupos Beta.



Grupos Beta takes the notebook each night and stores it in a safe. And a Grupos Beta official explained to Cindy and me that every morning, they talk to somebody from ~~Follow Us~~ US Customs and Border Protection.

Cindy Carcamo [SPEAKING SPANISH]? Or no.



 **Man** [SPEAKING SPANISH]  
This American Life Archive

**Cindy Carcamo** They just meet, talking. And then he says we're taking this many people in today, and that's how it works. Every day in the morning, **How to Listen** US Customs and Border Protection gives a number to Mexican officials, **About** and then the Mexican officials give that number to the notebook keeper and she calls that many names. **Overview**

**Ira Glass** On this particular day, only 20 people were allowed to enter the port of entry. **A Day in the Life** One day earlier in the week, it was zero. On any given day, with over 1,000 names uncalled in the notebook, it's 20, or 30, or 40. 50's the most anybody had seen.

- **Staff**

Cindy and I talked to lots of people who were waiting, and they were pretty much exactly who you'd expect. Many of them said they were escaping violence in Mexico or Central America. Some seemed truly terrified, even here in the plaza. **Music** One woman said that yesterday, her son thought that he'd spotted one of the men who was after them at the shelter they were staying at, so they fled to a hotel.

- **Fellowships**

But we also **Sounds Like** have a 25-year-old mom named Lara, from a tiny Mexican town called Jalapa in Guerrero, who is here because her cousin in California keeps telling her that her kids would have a better life in the United States. So she sold off **Store** everything and brought the five of them here-- really nice kids, by the way-- hoping for political asylum. **Contact Us** **Our Other Shows**

**Q****Cindy Carcamo** [SPEAKING SPANISH]

**Woman** No.

Follow Us

**Cindy Carcamo** No. No violence, she said. It's not about violence.



**Ira Glass** 

If she's not fleeing violence, she doesn't really have much chance of getting asylum in the United States. It was weird to talk to somebody and know that she probably would not get what she had pinned all her hopes on and traveled 1,500 miles for, and that she and her kids were probably going to wait for weeks and then get turned back. I never had the experience of knowing so clearly someone's future that they do not know. It was hard to keep looking her in the eye.

- Overview

**Man** You know, everything was in Spanish, right? So I don't understand  
◦ Staff Spanish. I didn't get anything. So I want to know what's happening.

- Announcements

**Karen** Give me a moment.  
◦ Fellowships

◦ Jobs

**Man** Yesterday you told me "manana." Today again, "manana."

- Music

**Karen** OK.

- Make Radio

**Ira Glass** When Karen finished rounding up her 20 people for the day, this guy from Cameroon, named Ransom, approached her. Karen's English doesn't go much past "give me a moment," and his Spanish doesn't go much past "manana."  
◦ FAQ So Karen dragged in Cindy, the *LA Times* reporter, to translate.

- Store

**Man** But can you ask her how many people will be waiting tomorrow?

- Contact Us

**Cindy Carcamo** [SPEAKING SPANISH]  
◦ Our Other Shows

**Q**Karen [SPEAKING SPANISH]

**Ira Glass** When they're done, Ransom told me and Cindy that he left Cameroon with 16 other people three months before. They flew to Ecuador, which is a path that lots of people take because visas are easy to get there. Then they walked through the jungle, north through Central America, sleeping in the bush, till they got here three weeks ago.



 **Man** It's been a tough journey. It's really been tough. It's been a long way.  
This American Life Archive  
The money is finished. Like, I don't have a way to stay. That's the problem.  
That's why I'm frustrated. That's the problem.

## How to Listen

**Cindy Carcamo** Where are you staying?

## About

**Man** We just live nearby. We just-- you wouldn't understand. It's quite tough. We're like 40 people in one room. One small room. It's just-- I don't know how something like that--

- Announcements

**Ira Glass** How much do you pay for that?  
◦ Fellowships

**Man** We pay like \$50 a month.

- Music

**Ira Glass** And he's going to be here so long that he has to pay a second month. He says they were robbed along the way in the jungle. So when he arrived in Tijuana three weeks ago, he only had \$80. With so little money, how is he surviving?  
◦ Make Radio  
◦ On The Road

**Man** Well, water in the absence of food. I drink water.

- Submissions

**Ira Glass** The situation he's fleeing should make him a good candidate for asylum in the United States. The government of Cameroon has been killing the English-speaking minority in the country and burning their homes, trying to suppress an armed uprising.  
◦ Store  
◦ Contact Us  
◦ Our Other Shows

But it's a hard moment to try to enter our country. The Trump administration is doing all kinds of things to be stricter with potential immigrants. And as you'll hear this hour, some of them are keeping desperate people waiting outside the border for weeks. Even if you understand that we're trying to be stricter with who's coming into the country, it can be hard to understand why we're doing it like this.  
Follow Us

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Today on our program, I think at this point, most of us have heard about a few of the things that the President and his appointees have done to try to get control of the border. We've heard about the family separations, we've heard about the travel ban. But in fact, it's a wide-ranging, coordinated effort across many agencies. All kinds of things that have not gotten a lot of attention.

## About

What's interesting is that so much of their effort, lots of the things that they're doing, are not cracking down on people breaking the law or sneaking across the border, not targeting criminals or bad hombres. Many of the efforts are targeted at the people who are trying their best to play by the rules and do what we ask of foreigners who want to come here. People trying to obey our laws, like asylum seekers showing up at our door saying, I'm in danger at home. Your laws allow me to apply for haven.

- Music

Today we take you on a tour of the many, many things that are all happening, the ways that we're shutting our doors to outsiders. From WBEZ Chicago, it's *This American Life*. I'm Ira Glass. Stay with us.

- FAQ

Act One: All Together Now

- Submissions

Ira Glass Act One, All Together Now. So to enter the United States from the south, you can go to the official border station, the port of entry, and do it legally, like the people who you heard trying to do it in that plaza in Tijuana. Well, you might get to that plaza, see the line, see the wait, and pause, or maybe try to go to the border station in Brownsville or El Paso. Again, you might pause and decide to take your kids, and take your chances, and head out to cross the border illegally.

I was talking to a Customs and Border Protection officer, a spokesman for the union, Chris Cabrera. He patrols the area around the Rio Grande and he says that he picks up people like this all the time. They tell him they tried the port of entry.



 **Chris Cabrera** The line was too long. They didn't want to wait that long.  
This American Life Archive  
And that's why a lot of them choose to come through the river, because they  
don't want to wait.

### How to Listen

**Ira Glass** Once he apprehends them, there's something new now that they go through under this administration. A new thing that's happening on the border. People caught crossing into the country illegally are being rounded up and sent to federal criminal court in mass hearings with dozens of people getting sentenced at the same time. The government has done these hearings in the past, but never on the scale that's happening now.

- **Fellowships**

As of April, they're doing them in every district along the border, sometimes twice a day, with tens of thousands of people convicted. They're prosecuting a crime that didn't used to be treated like a crime. Before this, if you cross the border illegally, you'd most likely just get put into immigration proceedings and probably deported.

- **Music**

- **Make Radio**

- **On The Road**

- **FAQ**

This is happening under the administration's Zero Tolerance Policy. You probably heard about the part of that policy that separated children from their parents. That part has officially ended. But this move to prosecute border crossings as criminal offenses, this was actually the main point of the Zero Tolerance Policy.

- **Contact Us**

Reporter Julia Preston went to McAllen, Texas, to one of the courts that's had the highest number of prosecutions since this all started to see what this looks like in practice. And what she discovered is what's happening now is just the first step towards much bigger things that are in the works. Here's Julia.

### Follow Us

**Julia Preston** Picture a federal courtroom. The defendants sit with their lawyers at one table, the prosecutors on the other side, the judge up front. The McAllen courtroom was a stunningly different site. Five rows of wooden benches, usually



meant for visitors, were packed with defendants, squeezed in shoulder to shoulder.  This American Life Archive  
74 of them.

### Recommended

The defendants were dressed in tattered t-shirts and jeans, not prison uniforms.

#### How to Listen

Some of the men had trouble keeping their pants up when they stood because their belts ~~were taken away~~ when they were detained. They'd been caught by the Border Patrol after they crossed the Rio Grande River. Most of them just one or two days before.

- Staff

#### At the Hearing

Scott Hacker ~~Ladies and gentlemen, let me ask you please to stand and raise your right hand. Take an oath before the court this morning for these proceedings.~~

- Jobs

Julia Preston ~~MUSIC~~ That's the sound of 74 people standing up to be sworn in when they're shackled at the ankles and chained around the waist. They all had one hand that was cuffed tightly to the waist chain and just one hand free.

- On The Road

In another hearing I went to, there were 87 defendants. In that one, the marshals had to put some of them in the jury box. The defendants would all be out of there- charged, ~~Sentenced~~, and sentenced-- in just over two hours. It was mass justice at head-spinning speed.

- Store

The magistrate judge presiding over this hearing, Scott Hacker, didn't sit in his usual place on the high bench. Instead, he spent the whole hearing on his feet, right in front of the migrants, so he could see each one of them. The migrants were wearing  wireless headphones to hear the Spanish interpreter. Judge Hacker took a few minutes to make sure everyone's headphone was working.

#### Follow Us

Scott Hacker Sir, can you hear? The gentlemen next to you. Can you hear?

Julia Preston The defendants awkwardly adjusted their headphones with their one free hand. Throughout the hearing, the security guards ran around as tech



~~support, resetting the headphones or swapping them out for fresh ones.~~ Judge ~~This American Life Archive~~ Hacker ran the hearing like a professor, explaining things in plain language and raising an index finger in the air in big gestures to punctuate his points. He addressed the migrants as sir and ma'am, and ladies and gentlemen.

### How to Listen

~~About~~ **Scott Hacker** This is your day in court. It's important that you hear and understand everything that I explain to you.

#### ◦ Staff

**Julia Preston** I'll admit, I was surprised. I was expecting some kind of rodeo justice. ~~People herded through~~ with no idea what was happening to them. But it wasn't that. The judge, the public defenders, even the prosecutors seemed to be working hard to ensure that all 74 defendants got some kind of basic due process. Every time ~~Jobs~~ the judge explained something, he would go around pointing to each defendant, one by one, getting them to confirm that they understood.

#### ◦ Make Radio

**Scott Hacker** Then I'll start with the person on the front row.

[INAUDIBLE] He'll answer yes or no, then I'll point to Miss [INAUDIBLE]. She'll answer. Then I'll point to Miss Perez, she'll answer.

#### ◦ FAQ

~~When I'm finished~~ with the first row, I'll start with the gentleman on the second row. The third row, the fourth row, and continue until I get everyone. Have you understood the instructions? Yes or no, sir. Next.

#### ◦ Contact Us

**Man 1** Yes  
Our Other Shows

**Q** **Man 2** Si.

**Man 3** Yes.

Follow Us

**Man 4** Yes.



**Man 5** Si.





Recommended

How to Listen  
Man 8 Yes.

About

Man 9 Yes

◦ Staff  
Man 10 Si.

- Announcements

Man 11 Yes  
◦ Fellowships

◦ Jobs  
Man 12 Si.

- Music

Man 13 Yes.  
◦ Make Radio

Man 14 Si  
The Road

◦ FAQ  
Man 15 Yes.

- Submissions

Man 16 Si.  
◦ Store

◦ Contact Us  
Man 17 Yes

- Our Other Shows

Man 18 Si.



Julia Preston 74 yeses. Over the course of the hearing, he would go around to every person this way a total of 16 times. Judge Hacker explained the crime they were accused of, illegal entry. It's a federal offense, but the first time around it's a minor one. A misdemeanor.



Scott Hacker



 Do each of you understand this charge of illegal entry? Please answer yes or no, starting with you, sir.

Recommended

**Man 19** Yes, sir.  
How to Listen

**All** **Woman** Yes, sir.

- Overview

**Man 20** Yes, sir.

- Staff

**Julia Preston** ~~Answer~~ ~~Answers~~ ~~Yes~~, yes, yes 74 times. A judge I observed in another hearing had a different method. For some questions, he had all the defendants answer in unison, which sounded like this.

- Jobs

**Judge** Do each of you understand your right to an attorney?

**All** ~~Music~~ **Make Radio**

- On The Road

**Woman** Yes.

- FAQ

**Julia Preston** ~~For This Show~~ ~~There was~~ ~~an amount of paperwork that went into that hearing was immense.~~ The documents for each person had to have the right name with correct spelling, the right country they were from, the right place and date where they were apprehended. ~~The~~ **Contact Us** ~~right details about how they crossed the river, whether they were on a raft, or a boat, or they swam, or they waded.~~ **Our Other Shows**

I found out later that Customs and Border Protection has an office nearby where agents, and lawyers, and paralegals work through the night to get all those piles of documents ready by dawn on the morning of the hearing. The Border Patrol ~~Follow Us~~ wasn't happy about this use of their agents. Officials told me they would much rather have the agents out on the front line patrolling the border.

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The judge carefully explained their right to a trial and the possible consequences of pleading guilty-- fines, jail time, deportation. They did have the option of pleading not guilty and going to trial, but they still wouldn't stand a chance of winning because, for most of them, the border patrol had caught them near the Rio Grande. They had admitted when and where they crossed the river, so there really wasn't much room for argument. They'd been caught in the act.

- Overview

The federal public defenders, all 18 of them in the McAllen office, had come to the courtroom in the hours before the hearing to meet with each defendant and basically prepare them to plead guilty. Most of those meetings lasted just a few minutes, then everyone declared their plea.

Judge Mr. Santos, they're saying your illegal entry occurred on the 19th of this month. How do you plead? Guilty or not guilty.

- Make Radio Man Guilty.

- On The Road

Judge Mr. Morales, they're saying your illegal entry occurred on the 19th of this month.

- Submissions

Julia Preston 74 guilty pleas. Even when you know it's coming, it's a somber thing to see. A group of people I wondered about during this hearing were the migrants who wanted to seek asylum. Because even with a criminal conviction, they can still apply for asylum, but it wasn't clear the migrants understood that.

Before sentencing, a man from Nicaragua stood up, worried and apologetic. He told the judge he'd come to the US to apply for political asylum. He'd brought evidence of his persecution.

Follow Us

Man [SPEAKING SPANISH]



Julia Preston



If he took a guilty plea, he asked, would he be deported right away and never get a chance at asylum? Judge Hackett thought he would get a chance, but he couldn't say for certain. He's not an immigration judge.

### How to Listen

The way it works is that, after the hearing, the man will be transferred into detention in the immigration system, a different system, and there, he'll have to insist to the officers that he wants to pursue his asylum claims. A lot of people might not figure that out. For many asylum seekers, going first to criminal court was very confusing.

- Announcements

Then it was time for the sentences. Often in federal court, this takes days or weeks. But here, the judge didn't skip a beat. The sentences came right away. 10 days, 20 days for a handful of cases. People who had some kind of record-- who'd been convicted of illegal entry before, or had drug or domestic violence convictions, traffic violations-- the longest sentence for that group was 100 days.

- Make Radio

Everyone else, though, the vast majority in this courtroom-- had no criminal record in the US and this was their first illegal entry offense. All of those people were given the same sentence, time served. In other words, the time they'd already spent in detention, which, for most of them, was less than two days. Two days. All of this work to deter illegal crossings, and yet most everyone walked out of the court that day with basically no punishment.

- Contact Us

Leaving the courtroom, I had a lot of questions. When Attorney General Jeff Sessions talks about this new policy of prosecuting everyone who crosses the border illegally, he says its purpose is to deter people from making those crossings. But how is two days of detention any kind of deterrent? It didn't make sense. Especially when you consider the massive amount of resources that go into these hearings.

The border patrol agents writing up the charges, the paralegals, the court clerks, the prosecutors checking criminal backgrounds, and figuring out who they should



recommend for extra jail time. The Justice Department added eight new prosecutors in southern Texas this summer for these cases. 18 public defenders, the marshals and security guards, getting dozens of shackled people in and out of the courthouse. The buses and vans to get them there.

### How to Listen

And these misdemeanor cases are sapping away the energy and time of everyone for the other business of the court, which is prosecuting more serious crimes, including narcotics, money laundering, trafficking, and weapons offenses. I really didn't know what to make of it all until I had a conversation with Ryan Patrick.

#### ◦ Announcements

He's the head prosecutor of the federal district that McAllen is part of, the Southern District of Texas. And he told me something I hadn't heard from the attorney general or President Trump. He told me these misdemeanor prosecutions are just phase one of a larger strategy by the Justice Department.

#### ◦ Make Radio

Ryan Patrick So some of the way these cases are handled could very well change as our resources, on our side, change, as well.

#### ◦ FAQ

Julia Preston When you say it could very well change, you mean there could be more felony cases?

#### ◦ Store

Ryan Patrick There could be. Yes, ma'am.

#### ◦ Contact Us

Julia Preston I see. Is that the goal, or is that where you're trying to go with this?



Ryan Patrick As appropriate, and for cases that we can prove, yes, we will file more felony cases.

#### Follow Us

Julia Preston With illegal entry, the first offense is a misdemeanor. But if somebody is caught crossing illegally a second time, they can be prosecuted for a felony and go to prison for up to two years. A felony conviction makes it very



difficult for a person ever to get a visa to enter the United States legally, much less get a green card or become a citizen.

### Recommended

The government's ramping up to prosecute more people. Border patrol is hiring.

So are the US Marshals. In May, 32% of people caught crossing the southwest border were sent to be prosecuted. A month later, it was 46% of them.

Administration officials told me the goal is 100%. Literally zero tolerance for illegal crossings.

### Staff

This could mean prosecuting something like 200,000 people a year for the misdemeanor offense. Before long, it could mean tens of thousands of newly convicted felons in federal prison. President Trump and the attorney general have long said that people who cross the border illegally are just criminals. Now, every day, more and more of them are becoming exactly that.

Ira Glass Julia Preston. She's a contributing writer to The Marshall Project. You can read a print version of her story on The Marshall Project's website, marshallproject.org.

### FAQ

Act Two: Kitchen Sink

### Submissions

Ira Glass Act Two, The Kitchen Sink. So the administration's immigration policy-- this has been widely reported-- is run from the office of White House senior advisor, Stephen Miller. He's 33 years old, brings a detailed knowledge of immigration issues and regulations to the task, has installed like-minded people at the various agencies that deal with immigration.

We requested sit-down interviews with him, and with numerous other administration officials throughout the government. They all turned us down. But I'm going to take this act and try to give you a sense of the sweep of the changes



that they put into place. The variety, and ingenuity, and comprehensiveness of them. Here we go.

### Recommended

The administration has brought back workplace raids at a level that hasn't been done for years, rounding up hundreds of undocumented people at a time. The State Department and Department of Homeland Security have cracked down on recalcitrant countries. Yes, that is an official designation that we give to some countries. Recalcitrant. These are countries that do not accept deportees that we want to send them.

- Announcements

There were 20 countries like that just after the President took office. His administration has twisted arms, imposed sanctions, and convinced more than half of those countries to take people back, clearing the way for 15,000 more people to be deported. The Department of Homeland Security has set up a de-naturalization task force to go after people who lied on their citizenship applications, and literally strip away their citizenship.

- On The Road

The attorney general has changed the rules so that if you're fleeing gang violence or domestic violence, even if immigration agents believe that your life is in danger, that's not grounds for asylum in the United States. This affects a lot of people. The Attorney General explained it this way--

Jeff Sessions Asylum is not generally for those who suffered from a private act of violence or if a gang is in the neighborhood. It's always from members of groups who are persecuted by the state. Asylum was never meant to solve all problems, even serious problems, that people face every day all over the world.

Ira Glass And then there's a whole set of policies the Trump administration has put into place that affects all of the people who are trying to lawfully enter the United States. Filling out forms, sending in information, waiting their turns. They are all coming under increased scrutiny.



The forms are much longer. Applicants are called in to be interviewed about things they were never called in for before. And attorneys who help people through this process will tell you that they're getting a ton of what they call RFE's, Requests for Evidence, for perfectly ordinary things that, in the past, would have been routine.

## About

Here's an example. Immigration attorney Marisol Perez works at a firm that filed a visa request on behalf of their client, the Archdiocese of San Antonio, which is trying to hire a priest from another country. They were surprised when they got an RFE from the government. I've seen this-- asking them to prove that, in fact, the archdiocese really exists as a functioning business.

Jobs  
Marisol Perez It was shocking to us. This is the second-largest archdiocese-- Catholic archdiocese-- in the country. Certainly they're in business.

Music  
Certainly they're flourishing. Certainly they are a legitimate operating business.

Make Radio  
On The Road

Ira Glass Do you think it was just a bureaucratic snafu?

FAQ

Marisol Perez I chalked it up to that, there are lots of bureaucratic snafus.

Store

Ira Glass Contact Us It didn't take much work for me to collect some. There was the musician who was told that the two Grammys he won and the three that he was nominated for, but did not win, were not sufficient evidence of his musical talent, and that more proof would be required before he could reside in the United States.

Follow Us There was the RFE asking a British citizen to have her British birth certificate translated into English, please. There was the RFE where the government argued that an architect didn't qualify for the visa he wanted because you don't need a specialized degree to be an architect. Even though, of course, you do need a



specialized degree. According to one study, in the last quarter of 2017 alone, the percentage of work visas getting RFE's tripled. 3/4 of them got RFE's.

## Recommended

Jacqueline Watson The most mundane ones are just asking for documents that you've already sent.

## About

Ira Glass Jacqueline Watson is an immigration attorney in Austin. She says she's now seeing this in the vast majority of cases she files. RFE's asking for stuff she's already submitted.

- Announcements

Jacqueline Watson If it happens in one case, you can say, OK, that was a mistake. If it happens in almost every case you file, there's something wrong.

- Music

Ira Glass She and other immigration attorneys see it as a deliberate strategy to gum up the works, slow the process, discourage people from applying, give out fewer visas. And she said when you get an RFE, it also means you can't get work permits or travel permits that you would otherwise be able to get while applying.

- FAQ

A spokesman for the US citizenship and Immigration Services, USCIS emailed me a statement saying that assertions that they are trying to slow the immigration process are, quote, "inaccurate" and, in fact, their reforms are intended to do the opposite. Quote, reduce incomplete or frivolous filings, thus speeding up the immigration process for many applicants and petitioners, allowing them to receive a decision faster."



Attorneys say visas and green cards are now being turned down all the time for reasons that they never saw before. One big one that I was told comes up a lot is applications being rejected because the government thinks that you'll become a burden on the public. And the attorneys I spoke with sounded truly bewildered by the way that they are enforcing this.



For example, Marisol Perez has a client who's 11 years old, born in Mexico. His mom married an American and wanted to bring him to the United States, and the green card application had everything the government has asked for in the past. Father made enough money, father was working, showed his tax returns. But the kid was turned down because the government said that he would become a public charge.

- Overview

**Marisol Perez** So we inquire and ask, we're not sure why this person has been denied. Could you provide more information? Still no explanation.

- Staff
- Announcements

**Ira Glass** All this has led Jacqueline Watson, and a lot of immigration attorneys, to conclude that, at this point--

- Fellowships
- Jobs

**Jacqueline Watson** The Department of Homeland Security is always looking for new and creative ways to fuck our clients.

- Make Radio

**Ira Glass** There's a brand new way that Jacqueline's worried about. You know those Requests for Evidence that lawyers complained about? USCIS has a new rule. If they decide there isn't enough evidence to support a claim, as of this month, they don't need to issue a Request for Evidence at all. They could simply turn down the application.

The head of USCIS, Francis Cissna, is quoted in the press release on this. He says, quote, "For too long, our immigration system has been bogged down with frivolous or meritless claims that slow down processing for everyone." He said, "Doing this would discourage people from gaming the system."

This is how all this looks to people on his side of things, the people calling for these changes and making these changes in our immigration system. They see every part of this so totally differently from the way the immigration attorneys do. From their point of view, the entire immigration system is a mess, overloaded with false claims and people trying to cheat their way into the United States.



When the Attorney General gives speeches, he talks about nearly 100,000 people a year seeking asylum. Seeking asylum because they know if you say the word asylum we'll set you free in the United States till the judge can see your case years from now. Lots of them never show up for their day in court.

### How to Listen

About Jeff Sessions The system is being gamed. There's no doubt about it.

- Overview

Ira Glass Mark Krikorian is the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington think tank that calls for stricter controls on immigration. He makes the case that the United States would be better off if we would just cut the number of people who immigrate here each year to less than half of what it is now. He sums it up this way. He doesn't see a need for a huge, thriving country like ours, with hundreds of millions of people, to import any workers from overseas.

So--

- Music

◦ Make Radio Mark Krikorian Which categories of people have such a compelling case to be admitted that we let them in? That would be husbands, wives, and little kids of American citizens, genuine Einsteins-- humanity has not produced that many Einsteins a year-- and humanitarian immigration to the extent that people cannot stay where they are for a second longer. You add all that up, that's maybe 400,000 people a year, 350,000. It's still a lot of people, but it's fewer than there are now.

- Contact Us

Ira Glass Right now, it's about a million legal immigrants in a year. Of course, you could quibble with his numbers. Somebody else might argue that there are over a million people in the category, "people who cannot stay where they are for a second longer."

Follow Us But given this vision that we don't need outsiders, and that tons of people are trying to cheat and game their way into the country, when I told Krikorian what the immigration attorneys had told me about all the ways that the Trump administration seemed to be slowing things down and finding any excuse to say no



to their clients, he was utterly unimpressed. He appreciated the tighter rules and extra scrutiny that have come down this last year and a half.

### Recommended

**Mark Krikorian** It's definitely called for. It's long overdue. Now, there's always going to be, you know, bureaucratic absurdities. Does the Archdiocese of San Antonio really exist? I mean, this is the kind of thing that any large organization is going to generate sometimes. But the strict scrutiny of applications is long, long overdue.

- Staff

**Ira Glass** ~~Moneychanger~~ One of the biggest ideas that's been floated publicly by the White House Office of Management and Budget is a proposal that you won't be able to get legal residency, you won't be able to get a green card or citizenship, if you or your kids have ever gotten food stamps or other public benefits. Even if your kids are citizens.

◦ **Make Radio**  
If this went through, it would become impossible for millions of people to ever get legal status in this country. They become eligible for deportation. It's unclear, at this point, if the administration is going to go through with that proposal.

- FAQ

Coming up, ~~Food fight~~ between the President's immigration staffers, the State Department, the Office of Management and Budget, and the most powerful military the world has ever known. Guess who wins? That's in a minute, from Chicago's ~~Contact Us~~ Public Radio, when our program continues.

- Our Other Shows

Act Three: The Terminators



**Ira Glass** It's *This American Life*. I'm Ira Glass. In today's program, "Let Me Count the Ways," we're trying to document the many, many ways that the Trump administration is changing immigration enforcement across many agencies, including some things that have not gotten a lot of attention. We've arrived at Act Three of our show. Act Three, The Terminators.



So the people directing immigration policy for the White House generally don't talk much to the press. They do the work behind the scenes and out of sight from the public. But some emails were released as part of a lawsuit, and they give us the most vivid picture we have gotten of these people at work, of them enacting the project that is at the heart of this administration.

## About

On immigration, probably more than anything, the President's agenda is a radical departure from any Republican or Democrat who's ever held the office. He complains frequently about the bureaucracy, the deep state trying to thwart him. And in these emails, you can see the battle play out between the political appointees and the bureaucracy.

Jobs  
Music  
Make Radio  
On The Road  
FAQ

The emails show them trying to roll back one particular part of immigration policy, a part that could result in half a million people having to leave the United States. In these emails, the appointee's tone is almost uniformly polite, professional. The career civil servants ask to handle things so differently than they have in the past. They push back respectfully in various ways. One of our producers, Nadia Reiman, read all the emails, which took days, and put this together.

### Submissions

Nadia Reiman The emails were about this thing called TPS, Temporary Protected Status. It's a humanitarian program, and it works like this. If you're in the US and some sort of disaster hits your home country-- an earthquake or hurricane, or a war breaks out-- the Secretary of Homeland Security can grant temporary protected status, which means, we get it. You can't go back to your country right now. So stick around for 18 months or so. You can get a work permit, live here, settle for a bit until things clear up at home.

The President's allies don't like TPS for a couple of reasons. First, it's not just for people who are here legally. If you're here illegally when disaster hits your home country, congrats, you get legal status, too. Also, even though it's called



temporary, it can get renewed over and over and over again. Honduras, for example, got hit by a hurricane in 1998, and it still has TPS almost 20 years later.

### Recommended

And these renewals, they're up to the Department of Homeland Security. Every year, they're supposed to gather information to try to figure out, has the country recovered? Is it safe for people to return home or not? If it is, they can end TPS for that country, but it's up to DHS to decide.

So for Trump political appointees to get rid of TPS for a country, what they have to do is prove that the country has recovered from whatever crisis it once had. They have to prove it's safe for people to go home.

The first country they try it with is Haiti. Haiti got TPS eight years ago when that earthquake hit in 2010. In the first months of the Trump administration, the bureaucracy put together a report that said, basically, what they'd said in the past. Things are still bad in Haiti. Let's renew TPS. 18 more months please.

#### On The Road

This is when a Trump appointee named Kathy Nuebel Kovarik enters the scene. Before this job, she did immigration policy for Senator Chuck Grassley, an anti-immigration Subsidies who then urged the President to hire her, on Twitter. So in April 2017, she sends out an email saying, basically, can anyone hustle up info on how Haiti's recovered from the earthquake? She asked for, quote, "rebuilding stories, work of nonprofits, how the US is helping in certain industries. We need more than Haiti is really horror stories." End quote.

A researcher chimes in, unhelpfully. Quote, "Unfortunately, conditions in Haiti remain difficult. Please see below." And he goes on to share five bullet points. The first one, Haiti has not fully recovered from the 2010 earthquake. He also mentions hurricanes that have hit the island, large scale flooding, near-famine conditions, double-digit inflation. He gets a polite, "Thank you. Very useful," from his boss.

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Before long, he gets asked for more info. Can you grab more numbers on GDP growth? You said it was not so good, but can you look at longer-term trends? What about some stuff about how they're rebuilding the presidential palace? Can you try that? If there's much of a fight about any of this, it's not on email.

### How to Listen

Eventually, the staffers find some new numbers for their bosses. They know that economic growth is small, but it's there; that 98% of camps for earthquake survivors are now closed; that food shortages in the country are because of hurricanes and bad infrastructure, not necessarily related to the earthquake. In November, it's officially announced. Haitians lose their protected status. One country down, onto the next.

Next up is Sudan. And here is where this becomes a full-blown smackdown between three federal agencies-- Homeland Security, State Department, and the Department of Defense. Sudan's had TPS since 1997 because of the civil war there. There's still widespread fighting in parts of the country. So when its TPS status comes up for review, a couple of staffers put together a draft of the country conditions, describing what it's like there, and it's pretty grim.

On page three, it says, quote, "unsafe for individuals to return to Sudan." On page four, it says, quote, "Termination does not appear to be warranted," meaning Sudan's status should not be terminated. People should be allowed to stay in the US. But then, on page five, when we get to the final recommendation, it says exactly the opposite. Quote, "USCIS recommends termination."

The higher-ups noticed this discrepancy and realized how it might look. Frank Cissna, the guy who's been tapped to be the new director of USCIS, another Trump political appointee, he reads the country report for Sudan and writes, quote, "The memo reads like one person who strongly supports extending TPS wrote everything up to the recommendations section, and then someone who opposes extensions snuck up behind the first guy, clubbed him over the head,



pushed his senseless body out of the way, and finished the memo. Am I missing something?" End quote.

### Recommended

Right away, political appointee Kathy Nuebel Kovarik is like, sorry about that. She responds, quote, "Well, I'll take the blame for this," and sends it to someone on her team <sup>How to Listen</sup> <sup>About</sup> <sup>To Fix</sup> a career civil servant named Brandon Prelogar.

- Overview

Prelogar didn't respond to my request for an interview. The administration officials in these emails didn't either. But I can tell you a few things about him.

- Staff
- Announcements

He's the Chief for international and humanitarian affairs at USCIS. He's been working for the Department of Homeland Security since 2007 through both Bush and Obama, which depending on how you look at it, makes him either an operative <sup>Jobs</sup> <sup>Music</sup> for the deep state trying to thwart our President at every turn, or a typical DC civil servant trying to do his job.

- Fellowships
- Make Radio

Throughout <sup>On The Road</sup> all these emails, every so often he pops up, calmly raising his hand and reminding everyone of the rules. He's not standing in the way, exactly. It's more like he's fact checking, waving his arms, politely warning of trouble ahead. Saying, <sup>FAQ</sup> <sup>Well, you're asking</sup> to do that, but the facts might not be with you. He has this thing <sup>Store</sup> he writes over and over, like an existential truth. "Country conditions are what they are."

- Contact Us

Anyway, <sup>Our Other Shows</sup> he's assigned to fix the inconsistent memo ASAP. He responds, "Got it. Here's our thinking. The country conditions are what they are. If they're uncomfortable with the termination conclusion following from them and they want to stick with that conclusion, we've proposed paring down that section." End quote. In other words, if the conclusion doesn't match the facts, then your best bet is to <sup>Follow Us</sup> remove some of the facts.

He sends <sup>possible</sup> wording they could use to do that, but warns, quote, "Providing sanitized country conditions in a public-facing document would open us up to the



charge that our account is lopsided and invite criticism." He passes the draft back to his boss. It goes through more hands, and then it gets to one of the big guns in the Department of Homeland Security, a senior staffer named Gene Hamilton.

### How to Listen

Gene Hamilton's a political appointee. He was the person responsible for immigration policy in the transition team. He worked with Stephen Miller back in the Senate ~~in Jeff Sessions's office~~. So he takes this Sudan report and he removes even more facts than Brandon suggested. Specifically, he edits out references to human rights violations.

- Announcements

When Brandon sees the results, he once again respectfully raises a red flag. He's like, guys, based on what they've said so far, the State Department is probably not going to like that. He adds, quote, "For our part, we just say that this could be read as taking another step toward providing an incomplete and lopsided country conditions presentation to support termination." The email trail goes dead. Six days later, DHS announces they're terminating TPS for Sudan.

- On The Road

The next day, the State Department complains, just like Brandon said they would. They say the TPS report had, quote, "significant mischaracterizations that are at odds with ~~the State Department~~'s understanding of circumstances on the ground in Sudan." They complained they hadn't been notified of the Sudan TPS termination. That they had to find out about this when everyone else did. That they had to send diplomats in cabs to the embassies to do damage control.

- Our Other Shows

Then a White House official steps in. He writes Gene Hamilton to say that they'd received a, quote, "flurry of emails from the State Department and the National Security Council about the Sudan decision." He tells Gene Hamilton to go back to the language that the State Department and everyone else agreed to the week before.

Gene Hamilton writes back to the White House official, defiant, cc-ing all the bosses at DHS, quote, "I don't think we agree with that path." The White House



doesn't write back. Less than an hour later, Gene sends another email to the same White House guy and caves. Hi again, he says. We will pull back, though, he says, many of the concerns are, quote, "entirely overblown and completely irrelevant."

### Recommended

#### How to Listen

The next day, the Department of Defense weighs in. A foreign affairs specialist sends an email. It begins, "It has been brought to our attention," and the tone of utter disapproval never lets up. She says the Sudan memo is wrong about conditions in Sudan. That armed conflict is ongoing. It's not safe for Sudanese to return there.

- Announcements

She says what they've written is, quote, "a clear departure to past DOD messaging on Darfur to our Congressional committees and foreign partners." She says the Department of Defense would appreciate being included in any policy discussions that impact Sudan.

#### Make Radio

There are more emails after that, and in the end, Gene Hamilton does make a small concession. A few sentences get added back to the Sudan memo. But the result is still the same. TPS for Sudan is ended. The new guard wins.

- FAQ

One by one, the countries in these emails lose TPS. After Sudan comes Nicaragua. Soon it's El Salvador, Nepal, Honduras. The administration ended up terminating TPS for 98% of the people who had it.

- Contact Us

I talk to government officials who've dealt with TPS, and they all said TPS was messy. That it was something temporary that became permanent, and it probably shouldn't have. But at the same time, an enormous number of people are currently living here on TPS. Over 400,000. Most of them have been here legally for almost 20 years.

#### Follow Us

Inevitably, a whole new life grows out of two decades of just being somewhere. People start businesses, buy houses, get married, have kids. And these kids, the sons and daughters of TPS recipients, US citizens, they're part of the lawsuit that



released all these emails. They're suing the government over this very mess so their parents aren't sent back home to a place that isn't their home anymore.

## Recommended

# Act Four: Now I'm Me, Now You Don't How to Listen

## About

Ira Glass Nadia Reiman. She's one of the producers of our show. Act Four, IRC  
You, Now You Don't. The President has cut the number of refugees officially  
allowed into the United States from 110,000, under the previous administration, to  
45,000. But in fact, in this fiscal year, they're not even going to bring in that many  
people. Just 22,000 will arrive. That's the smallest number ever in the history of the  
refugee program here.

## ◦ Jobs

So a bunch of these refugee settlement offices that are around the country are going to be shutting down. Our producer, Zoe Chace, was there for the final days of one of them in ~~Kansas City~~ <sup>Music</sup> Kansas City, Kansas.

## ◦ On The Road

**Zoe Chace** I flew into a tiny airport. Garden City is southwest Kansas, the middle of the plains. Oklahoma's right below us. Colorado's not far west. Amy Longa was waiting there at the airport. She started the office four years ago for the International Rescue Committee. She told me I'd recognize her, and I did. The only black woman there. Straight back, tall, and a bright turquoise African print dress. ° [Contact Us](#)

## ◦ Our Other Shows

Everyone recognizes Amy. I'll find out soon then even Amy refers to herself in the third person a lot. Like, she'll say, everybody knows Amy. I can't get away because it's, like, Amy, Amy, Amy everywhere I go.

And ~~Folly~~, like, the kid at the Hertz counter called out to her. Amy, have you seen this? And handed her a flyer for some kind of Hertz deal. It's like the character Amy plays in this town is bigger than Amy actually is.



It's Tuesday, July 24. The office is supposed to close on Friday. I follow Amy in my rental car and when I get there, the office looks wrecked. Cardboard boxes, an abandoned paper shredder, an old car seat. I mean, it looks closed. But Amy's in the middle of a meeting, in Arabic.

### How to Listen

She and one of her clients are sitting in two office chairs pulled up near the door. Where you'd expect a desk between them, they're just knee to knee in these roly chairs. The client's name is Eltahir. He's from Sudan. He's apparently asking Amy to help him figure out why he got his federal tax refund, but not his state one. Amy takes the paper he brought. Says she'll look into it.

- Fellowships

**Amy Longa** OK. Now, are you comfortable leaving this with me and we make an appointment tomorrow?

- Music

**Man** OK.

- Make Radio

**Amy Longa** What do you want to do? I can't-- [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

- FAQ

**Zoe Chace** I'm looking around at this abandoned office and Amy and I'm like, what? Appointments tomorrow?

- Store

**Zoe Chace** OK. So why are you still having these conversations if you're going to be closed in two days?

- Our Other Shows

**Amy Longa** Because technically, the office is still open. The office is open.



**Zoe Chace** You're the only one here.

### Follow Us

**Amy Longa** I am the only one. And I'm here.

**Zoe Chace** Yeah.



 **Amy Longa** I'm supposed to have packed all these. And I-- it's difficult to pack when you still have to answer these questions.

### Recommended

**Zoe Chace** Refugee resettlement is exactly what you'd imagine, if you've ever thought about it. You do a bunch of interviews overseas, go through a major security screening process. You fly to the United States, someone meets you at the airport and takes you to your new home.

◦ **Staff**  
The US government funds a sparse apartment with food that's culturally relevant, like food ~~that will be familiar~~ to you, as well as cash assistance, housing assistance. This lasts for three months while you look for work and go through some cultural orientation. And all this is managed by a resettlement agency, a nonprofit that contracts ~~Jobs~~ with the State Department to do this stuff.

◦ **Music**

In Garden City, it's the International Rescue Committee, the IRC. They help you get a social security card, figure out your health insurance, find a job, go learn English. Pretty much all the things that make up a life here. Three months. 90 days. I do wonder how they came up with that. Making a whole life in 90 days.

◦ **FAQ**

The IRC ~~Office works~~ with their clients for up to five years with some government assistance. Most of Amy's time is spent with clients far longer than 90 days. This guy from Sudan, he's been here two years. This office is being closed because so few refugees ~~will be~~ relocated here in the future. But the fact is, Amy is right in the middle of these relationships, and she has to cut them off.

The ~~Q~~ people who are resettled here have a never-ending range of questions. For instance, this is Edie. He came to Garden City recently via a refugee camp in Tanzania. He's Congolese. He's a very giggly guy, but I think it's nerves.

~~Follow Us~~

He comes in, sits down with Amy, and unfolds a paper with four questions on it. One is ~~about~~ a guy not calling him back with a job. Another is about a bank card.



How do you use it? He didn't have a pin number. Didn't know what a pin was. She activates it.

### Recommended

Amy Longa Activated.  
How to Listen

Alma Thank you, madam. [INAUDIBLE] now. It was good.

- Overview

Zoe Chace There's a church question, a health insurance question, then he thinks  
◦ Staff of two more.

- Announcements

Man Another question now please. Sorry.  
◦ Fellowships

Zoe Chace Jobs It's like this all the time. How do I get a birth certificate for my new  
baby daughter? How much does it cost? How is my green card application doing?  
Do they need more information? Is my boss racist? Then why isn't he responding?  
◦ Make Radio

How much is it to go to the dentist? Should I pull this tooth out of my mouth? If I  
pull the tooth, should I replace it with a new tooth or leave the gap? And what will  
people around here think if I have a gap? Is that bad? Where is the dentist's office?  
◦ FAQ

- Submissions

One night Amy's meeting with this guy at his apartment. And when she's done,  
◦ Store this other guy, who's not even a client, runs after her and yells at her from a  
balcony Contact Us that he needs to talk. And she's got three days left in this job, but she  
makes an appointment with him, too. And again, I'm like, why are you meeting  
◦ Our Other Shows with this guy? Like, where is he going to sit even?



Amy Longa He walked out of that house. I'm sure he knew-- we were in the  
sitting room. He knew the IRC is there, or Amy. And as we moved out, he  
Follow Us got out to the balcony and said, I'm going to take this chance and ask. If it  
was not something important, he wouldn't have pushed the button that far.

- 

Zoe Chace  
◦

Amy has this ability where it's like she imagines all the thoughts in their head. She can picture the entire thought process of the person who's sitting in front of her.

### Recommended

Amy Longa He just didn't jump out and run. He chewed it. He digested it.  
How to Listen

Zoe Chace Mm-hmm. That's your problem, I think. You can imagine everybody's reality too closely.

Staff Amy has been a displaced person. First from Uganda, then to Sudan. She ended up in Khartoum. Then she had to flee Khartoum. Then back to Uganda where she was displaced again, until she went to college in the capital city Kampala. Then she worked for the UN, then she came to the US.

### Jobs

Music When Amy's office closes on Friday, Edie and the others will still have somewhere to go. They're getting hooked up with a local branch of Catholic Charities, a nonprofit that stepped in to fill this gap, to close out the 90 days of whoever's left. They've never done this work before, though, so it's been kind of trial by fire, more people than they expected.

### FAQ

Admin, they don't offer the suite of services and care that the IRC does. And they do not have caseworkers who were themselves displaced people in Africa.

### Contact Us

Talked to them, they copped to that. Yes, it's been hard. And no, we do not have the unique instinct of Amy Longa. So it's going to be different. Edie, who comes here at least three times a week, wants to know how to reach Amy after the office closes.

### Follow Us

Amy Longa No, I'm not giving you my cell phone number and I cannot give you my address. But Garden City's small. I can guarantee you we will meet somewhere.



**Zoe Chace** There was this one meeting I saw Amy have with a client that I will never forget.

Recommended

**Amy Longa** Hey. How are you, bubba?  
How to Listen

**Zoe Chace** This kid, Norkamal, he's just a kid, really. 19 years old. He's Rohingya Muslim from Myanmar. The Rohingyas have been brutally persecuted there. He fled to Bangladesh, then Malaysia, then he came to the United States not being able to speak.

◦ Announcements

It's almost like he has no vocal cords at all. He's injured. I don't know how or why. Like, he really can't talk. He talks like this. Like, if you just made a K sound at the back of your throat. It's a whisper. (WHISPERING) "Ka." He also can't read much or write at all.

◦ Fellowships ◦ Jobs ◦ Music

Nor and Amy have gotten very close this year. It's almost like a mother-son relationship. Nor wants to get a surgery, a risky surgery, that could bring his voice back. He has health insurance, but it still took him a year and a half working in a beef slaughterhouse to save up \$6,000 for the co-pay. Except, of course, his consultation with the doctor is for August 1.

◦ Store

August 1. the day after Amy's office closes, when she's no longer technically supposed to be working with them. Though, of course, she'll still be his contact with the hospital. It's taken them all year to perfect their communication, and it's intimate watching them. It's kind of a lip reading, and signing, and looking into each other's eyes. He shows her some medical records she told him to find.

**Amy Longa** You kept it together. I think this is it. You see, it's from the hospital in Malaysia.

**Zoe Chace**



They sit cross-legged from each other on the floor. Amy's desk was literally just pulled out from under her. Some guys came and picked it up as a donation.

### Recommended

Amy Longa Let's give it to the doctor, OK? Don't open it. Don't put anything in it. This is for the--

### About

No [INAUDIBLE]

- Staff

Zoe Chace That's him saying, "the doctor."

- Announcements

Amy Longa When?

- Fellowships

No [INAUDIBLE]

- Music

Zoe Chace Wednesday.

- Make Radio

Amy Longa Wednesday. Perfect. Bingo.

- FAQ

Zoe Chace Amy's clients. Lots of them non-English speaking, unskilled labor job having, ~~expensive surgery~~ booking. This is where the immigration debate lives. President Trump's idea, the idea of America First, it kind of means fewer people like this. Why can't we take care of the people in America first?

- Contact Us

Trump supporters have said that to me for years now. That they think refugees take American jobs. They cost taxpayers too much money, these government grants to resettle refugees. This county in Kansas went 63% for Trump, so I figure a lot of people here like his policies. I found one of them on Facebook being skeptical of refugees. Then I found her in real life--

Follow Us

Zoe Chace All right. Let me come a little closer.



in a farmhouse just past the meatpacking plant. She and her husband were sitting in their garage watching baseball, drinking beers, throwing the cans into the corner.

Recommended

How to Listen

John Becker [INAUDIBLE]

About

Zoe Chace OK. So who are you, sir?

◦ Staff

John Becker My name's John Becker.

◦ Announcements

Zoe Chace OK. And Mr. Becker, what do you make of this refugee resettlement office closing?

◦ Jobs

John Becker I don't even know what it is.

◦ Make Radio

Zoe Chace OK. So you know refugees come into Garden City, Kansas, right?

◦ On The Road

◦ FAQ

John Becker Refugees?

◦ Submissions

Zoe Chace Refugees.

◦ Store

John Becker Contact Us

◦ Our Other Shows

Zoe Chace OK. What's a refugee? A refugee is like, basically, they've been--

Qthey're coming from a war-torn country. Somalia, the Congo, Sudan, stuff like that.

Follow Us

John Becker I don't buy that. I don't believe that.

Zoe Chace OK. Well, I'll just tell you the definition of it first and--





**Zoe Chace** And they get vetted extensively.

### How to Listen

**John Becker** I don't believe that either.

### About

**Zoe Chace** You don't believe the vetting thing.

#### ◦ Staff

**John Becker** No. I don't believe they're vetted either.

#### ◦ Announcements

**Zoe Chace** Right. Well, I guess the distinction that I just do want to make, though, is that they are here legally. It's not illegal immigration. You know, they have permission to be here. They're flown over here by the UN and State Department.

#### MUSIC

#### ◦ Make Radio

**John Becker** Why are they doing that?

#### ◦ On The Road

**Zoe Chace** Well, because, you know, they're refugees. They can't go home.

#### ◦ FAQ

**John Becker** Why can't they?

#### ◦ Store

**Zoe Chace** Because their home is unsafe.

#### ◦ Contact Us

**John Becker** Oh, I don't buy that. I don't believe that either.

#### ◦ Our Other Shows

**Zoe Chace** Why don't you believe it?

**John Becker** I just don't believe all that stuff.

#### Follow Us

**Zoe Chace** John Becker is not the first person I've met who wants a moratorium on refugees. He is the first one who doesn't seem to believe in them, like they're unicorns or elves.



 **Zoe Chace** Well, it seems to me that now that they're closing down the office, there'll be fewer refugees here. Somebody is seeing things the way you are recommended

## How to Listen

**John Becker** So there's going to be few of them? Fewer?

## About

**Zoe Chace** Yeah.

## Staff

**John Becker** Oh, well, I applaud that.

- Announcements

**Zoe Chace** It's the Trump administration.  
◦ Fellowships

## Jobs

**John Becker** We don't want to change our whole society here just for a few refugees. We don't want to do that.

## Music

**Mrs Becker** They can go to a bigger town, bigger city maybe.

- On The Road

**Zoe Chace** They come here to change our culture. That's how the Beckers see it.

◦ **FAQ**  
Not to state the very, very obvious, but this is the opposite of Amy. Whereas she imagines ~~their lives and needs~~, to the point of anguish sometimes, he doesn't believe they actually exist. He can't imagine their lives.

◦ **Store**

Garden City has train tracks, and grain silos, and enormous wind turbines. It has cows in a field under a big metal sign that says Eat More Beef. It smells of shit around 4:00 in the afternoon. You can smell it at the Walmart parking lot.



But whatever politics that evokes for you, I believe most of the city doesn't agree with the Beckers. Of the people in town I found who wanted the office to close-- six-- **Follow Us** 2/3 of them were Beckers. Their relative had been killed on a motorcycle by a Somali.

- 
- 

The county that Garden City is in is not majority white anymore. There are taco spots everywhere. There's a Vietnamese grocery store. There's a Somali neighborhood. And the IRC office, in a way, acts as the glue between these two parts of town that are coming together.

### How to Listen

My impression is that most people in town don't want the office to close at all. People like the chief of police, who loves Amy, loves the IRC office. They worked together particularly closely when the Somali community here was threatened by a bomb plot by white militia guys outside of town. The local hospital works closely with the IRC and the local schools.

#### ◦ Fellowships

The Beckers complain newcomers aren't assimilating fast enough. John Becker said a few times, why don't they want to be Americans? But they very obviously do. That's why lots of them are in the IRC office day after day, like wide-eyed kids on the first day of high school. Help me figure out how to fit in. And that's what the IRC office helps them do.

#### ◦ On The Road

**Zoe Chace** Close the back of the truck.

#### ◦ FAQ

The moving company has just finished packing up the truck and slams the back door shut. They're driving all the files to Wichita, where the lone IRC office in the state remains. We watch them drive away, cart off the whole office that she founded four years ago.

#### ◦ Our Other Shows

**Amy Longa** All right. That is done. 3 o'clock, July 30.



**Zoe Chace** You did it.

#### Follow Us

**Amy Longa** Yeah.

**Zoe Chace** There goes the office around the corner.



 **Amy Longa** There goes the office around the corner. What next?  
This American Life Archive

**Zoe Chace** You know that feeling when you've packed everything up and you're like, whew, I did it. This was not that feeling.  
**How to Listen**

[PHONE RINGING]

- Overview

There is one thing, though, that Amy is really, truly satisfied about. You can hear it in her voice a few weeks later, a few weeks after the office is closed, when I call her.

- Staff
- Announcements

- Fellowships

**Amy Longa** Hi, Zoe!

- Jobs

**Zoe Chace** Hi, Amy.

- Make Radio

**Amy Longa** You want to say hi to Norkamal?

- On The Road

**Zoe Chace** Yes, I want to say hi to Norkamal.

- FAQ

Norkamal Subtitle: This is the guy who whispered "Wednesday."

- Store

**Nor** Hello?

- Contact Us

**Zoe Chace** Hi!  
**Our Other Shows**

**Nor** Hi. How are you?

**Zoe Chace** Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh.

**Follow Us**

**Nor** I can talk.

- 

**Zoe Chace** You can talk! Your voice is so, like, loud and clear.

- 



**Zoe Chace** And he has all this stuff to say. Amy says when she hears his voice, it sounds like one of her babies crying after he was just born.

### How to Listen

A ~~Not~~ [INAUDIBLE]

- Overview

**Zoe Chace** This is the first time I have heard her, just, pure joy.  
◦ Staff

[AMY LAUGHS AND SIGHS]

- Fellowships

Her office is closed, but she got this done.

- Jobs

**Ira Glass** ~~Music~~ ~~Make Radio~~ ~~On The Road~~ Zoe Chace. So podcast listeners, Zoe actually reported out an entire second story for today's program that we did not have time for on the radio, but she found some really interesting stuff. And since this podcast can be any length at all, I'm excited to play it for you now. This is a fifth act of today's show.

- FAQ

Don't tell anybody who heard the radio version of the show about this, OK? They don't need ~~to know it's~~ ~~it's~~ just between us. Don't let them know how much better the podcast is.

- Store

- Contact Us

Act Five: Why So Few

- Our Other Shows

**Ira Glass** ~~Q~~ This is Act Five of today's show. Act Five, Why So Few? And the best way to explain this story-- when Zoe was at the IRC office in Garden City, one of the refugees-- the guy at the beginning of her story, Edie-- he asked her at some point ~~folks~~, ~~why~~ why is this happening? Why are so few refugees coming in that this office has to close?

- 

-

And at the time, Zoe actually didn't really understand why. Like, why were only 22,000 refugees arriving in the United States if 45,000 was the number that the administration set for itself? And she looked into this, trying to figure it out. And to understand the answer, you have to go back to this promise that the President made back when he was a candidate. You remember this one.

## About

**Donald Trump Overview** Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete

shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's

representatives can figure out what the hell is going on.

◦ Announcements

[CROWD CHEERING]

◦ Fellowships

**Ira Glass Jobs** So the President acted on this campaign promise in his very first week in office with the travel ban, right? He banned travel to the United States from seven countries. But that was not all it did. It also shut down the refugee program. Like, the refugee program from all countries all over the world. It was, like, a total and complete shutdown for 120 days.

◦ FAQ

The idea is shut it down for 120 days while the administration figured out what the hell was going on. In other words, how we vet refugees that we resettle in this country. And at the end of 120 days, theoretically, the refugee resettlement program was supposed to start back up again.

◦ Contact Us

But then something weird happened. Refugee resettlement, it never really started back up again. Not full force. Look at the numbers. Take Iraq, which is not on the President's travel ban list-- the final one. Last year, we let in 6,886 refugees. This year, 130.

**Follow Us** OK. How come? Like, what happened? They went through a process, they came to a conclusion, they fixed their thing. Should have started back up. What happened? Zoe searched around and found somebody who actually knows.



**Zoe Chace** Back when Donald J. Trump said he wanted to know what the hell was going on, what he meant was, what's the vetting process for how we figure out who gets to come in? He didn't trust what was already in place. So when he announced the travel ban, the White House pulled together people from across the agencies. Homeland Security, the State Department, National Counterterrorism, Intelligence. All the people you'd want in a room like that.

- Overview

And one of the people in the room was Barbara Strack. She was the chief of refugee admissions for USCIS, USCIS being a Department of Homeland Security that handles immigration. She remembers their first meeting on day one of 120.

- Fellowships

**Barbara Strack** We met in a large conference room that was really full with people around the table and people against the wall. And--

- Music

**Zoe Chace** It was a lot of people.

- Make Radio

**Barbara Strack** A lot of people.

- FAQ

**Zoe Chace** Barbara says the way most people in the room were looking at it was like this. The refugee program is already incredibly rigorous. It's months, sometimes years, of interviews, data collection, security checks.

- Store

The people in the room were, like, we think of this as very safe. But OK, let's do better. Let's make what we already think is extreme vetting more extreme. It was a real A team. The top people. Barbara says everyone was on the same page.



**Barbara Strack** Our goal is that this program is up and running again on day 121. So we need to be very organized. We need to meet quickly and get the program through the other side when there can be confidence again.

- Follow Us

**Zoe Chace** I talked to three other officials who are involved in the 120-day group, two who still work in government, and they all felt like Barbara. Let's put our back

- Twitter icon

into it, focus, hit the target. So they do it. They meet, they divide into subgroups, they write up a report that makes a bunch of recommendations, which are classified Recommended

### How to Listen

My impression from Barbara and the others who worked on this was we implemented every improvement we could imagine to a process that was already tight. And the final conclusion of this group of experts was if you institute these improvements into the process that we already have, for sure, it is safe to turn the program back on. So go ahead. Start admitting the refugees again with the more extreme vetting that you wanted.

### ◦ Fellowships

And then, on about 110 of the 120 days, they hear back from the White House. The White House did not like the conclusion of this review. And according to Barbara and the others I spoke to in the group, the White House wanted it to change.

### ◦ Make Radio

**Barbara Strack** They had expressed concern about the recommendation to resume refugee processing of all nationalities.

### ◦ FAQ

**Zoe Chace** And do you know which nationalities the White House was worried about?

### ◦ Store

**Barbara Strack** I'm trying to think if there's any reason not to say this on the record. There's probably not. I was told that there was particular concern about Somali nationals.

**Zoe Chace** The administration specifically pointed to Somalis as the sticking point.

### Follow Us

**Zoe Chace** Why?

**Barbara Strack** I don't know.





**Barbara Strack** I honestly can't speculate.

**How to Listen**  
**Zoe Chace** You don't want to speculate.

**About**

**Barbara Strack** No, I honestly-- to this day, I don't know.

◦ **Staff**

**Zoe Chace** And there's no rationale that you were given? Like, because Somalia didn't look like that.

◦ **Fellowships**

**Barbara Strack** The rationale wasn't shared with me.

◦ **Jobs**

**Zoe Chace** Two government officials confirmed this for me. Somalia wasn't the only concern, they said, but it was a major concern. It was chief of staff John Kelly, in particular, who was unhappy, they said. I think it was bullshit, one guy in the group told me. At the end of the day, the data didn't show that Somalis were any special risk.

◦ **FAQ**

So after 120 days, the White House reopened the refugee program for some countries, but not for a handful of countries who make up a lot of the refugees that are resettled here. For Somalia and 10 others, including all the countries in the original travel ban, the refugee program would stay suspended. For them, the 120 day review got another 90 days.

**Barbara Strack** My boss asked me to think about options for how to address the White House's concerns.

**Zoe Chace** Barbara says she and the other members of her group were sort of at a loss for what else they could possibly review. But they went back to work. They came up with some more recommendations. After 90 days, in January 2018, the



White House did restart the whole refugee program. But it was like turning on a faucet and nothing coming out.

### Recommended

If you look at Somalia and those 10 other countries, this fiscal year it looks like we will admit 3% of who we allowed just the year before. Last year, we admitted more than 6,000 Somalis. This year, just 250. The extreme vetting has gotten so extreme, it seems that few people can actually get through it.

#### ◦ Staff

Barbara says the changes they recommended shouldn't have had this effect. It shouldn't ~~have slowed things down~~ so much. Others I spoke to from the group said the same thing. It's not clear why the numbers are so low, but Barbara and the other people I talked to said the White House just never supplied the staffing and the resources to carry out the new vetting.

#### ◦ Music

A few people told me that the FBI, in particular, isn't staffed up enough to do the checks it's supposed to do. As a result, there's not a ban in place on these refugees, but the outcome is nearly the same.

#### ◦ FAQ

A DHS spokesperson said the new screening procedures are undoubtedly making America ~~safest they've ever been~~ to one specific example. An Iraqi wanted for murder in Iraq who entered the United States through our refugee program in 2014. They said today, with the new vetting procedures, he would not have made it through.

#### ◦ Contact Us

There is some risk with every immigration program. If you wanted a zero-risk immigration system, you wouldn't have any immigration at all.



**Barbara Strack** My sense is that the risk tolerance of this administration is very, very low with regard to the refugee program. You know, approaching zero.

**Zoe Chace** Barbara thinks, though I believe DHS would deny this, that they just want a different kind of refugee coming in, if any come in at all. She and another



~~staffer told me about various times going up to the Hill to talk about the refugee program to Congress back when Jeff Sessions was a senator.~~

### Recommended

Do you vet for culture? he asked. Another time she saw someone else who's now a Trump official, Gene Hamilton, for a briefing. Do you screen for integration potential? Hamilton asked, the ability to assimilate? No, she said.

- Overview

That's something we've always taken pride in, actually, as a country, she told him.  
◦ Staff  
The standard for refugee resettlement has always been vulnerability. How much can we do for you, not how much you can do for us.

- Fellowships

Credits

- Jobs

- Music

Ira Glass Zoe Chace. Again, remember, this story is our secret. Don't tell anybody who heard ~~Make Radio Show~~. OK.

- On The Road

[MUSIC - PUSSY RIOT, "MAKE AMERICAN GREAT AGAIN"]

- FAQ

What do you want your world to look like? What do you want it to be? Do you know that a wall has two sides and nobody is free? Did your mama come from Mexico? Papa come from Palestine? Sneaking all through Syria, crossing all the border lines. ~~Contact Us~~

- Our Other Shows

Ira Glass Our program was produced today by Nadia Reiman. People who put together today's show included Zoe Chace, Dana Chivvis, Neil Drumming, Hillary Elkins, Damian Grave, Michelle Harris, Chana Joffe-Walt, David Kestenbaum, Seth Lind, Anna Martin, Miki Meek, Ben Phelan, Robyn Semien, Alissa Shipp, Lilly Sullivan, Christopher Swetala, Matt Tierney, Julie Whitaker, and Diane Wu.

Our Senior producer is Brian Reed. Our managing editor is Susan Burton. Special thanks today to so many lawyers. Erica [INAUDIBLE], Nicole Ramos,



[INAUDIBLE], Bob [INAUDIBLE], Jennifer Walker Gates, Miriam Ackerman, Morgan [INAUDIBLE], Ana Maria Schwartz, Anastasia Tonello, Edna Yang, Steven [? Navarre?] Rebecca [INAUDIBLE], Francisco [INAUDIBLE], Crystal [INAUDIBLE], Sandra Feist, Emmy McLean, Teigen [INAUDIBLE], Andy [INAUDIBLE], Rebecca Brown, Rebecca Press, and many others at Central American Legal Assistance.

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Also [INAUDIBLE], Robbie Grammer, Ben Kestling, Mark O'Brien, Marcy Smith, Katie [INAUDIBLE], Eric Schwartz, Sarah [? Kraus, ?] Jennifer [? Sine, ?] Mary [? Giovanella] and bunch of government spokespeople, including [INAUDIBLE], Michael [? Bars, ?] and [? Devin ?] [? O'Malley. ?]

Our website, [thisamericanlife.org](http://thisamericanlife.org). *This American Life* is delivered to public radio stations by PRX, the Public Radio Exchange. Thanks, as always, to our program's co-founder, Mr. Torey Malatia. You know, he keeps inviting me to this little vacation house he has. And whenever I ask him, like, what is it like? He's so vague. He's just - On The Road

◦ FAQ  
**Nadia Reiman** The country conditions are what they are.

- Submissions

**Ira Glass** I'm Ira Glass. Back next week with more stories of *This American Life*.

[MUSIC PUSSY RIOT, "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN"]

- Our Other Shows

Make America great again.



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## Recommended

How to Listen



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